

## First Local 2108 RMC President Passes Away

Kathryn Harrison, first President of Local 2108's Retired Members Chapter, passed away after a two year battle with cancer, on December 8, 2009. Kathy was no stranger to being the first at things. Along with being the first Local 2108 RMC President, she also had the distinction of being the first female Services Technician in Laurel in the old C&P Telephone Company.

The following tribute is reprinted in part from an article that appeared in the Laurel (MD) Leader newspaper. We couldn't say it any better:

Kathy was a beautiful person, inside and out. She was blessed with youthful good looks and a sunny disposition, neither of which were diminished by her illness or its treatment. She was one of those people with deep-down goodness, who cared about others because she knew no other way to live her life; loving and caring were wired in her DNA. Kathy was a gift to us all. To those that knew her, she was the kind of person you liked being around, someone who was comfortable in her own skin, unpretentious, interesting and interested.

Those that didn't know her learned through her altruism that she was a kind-hearted soul who viewed life in its grand scheme. From her union leadership, to volunteering at Elizabeth House and Laurel Elementary School, to her work with Patrons for Peace, to her involvement and activism in the Old Town community, to helping out in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, to campaigning for our president, Kathy had the courage to act on her convictions. She was someone who lived Gandhi's call to "Be the difference you want to see in the world."

A memorial service was held December 13th at Donaldson Funeral Home in Laurel, MD. It was standing room only on that cold and rainy afternoon - even Mayor Craig Moe couldn't find a seat. Kathy's oldest brother, Keith Harrison, spoke of some of his sister's firsts: Kathy was a member of the first graduating class of Atholton High School, and in 1973 Kathy became the first female telephone installer for the old Chesapeake & Potomac (C&P) phone company when its Laurel office was the building that sits across from Donaldson's on Carroll Avenue. Keith told of how he watched the Harrison family dynamics change for the better as Kathy grew to be the "family matriarch." And he spoke of Kathy's rock-steady love and devotion to her husband, Steve Williams, and her son, James Coen V.

Her good friend and C&P co-worker, Kim Witmer, spoke of Kathy's "gift of friendship, her kind spirit and her natural instinct to give." Friend and neighbor Kara Weinstein will always treasure the Riverfront Park walks with Kathy, the visits to her house and the friendship of a "mindful person of courage and purpose," who "didn't shy away from a call to a cause." Sue Lambert, another of the many C&P folks at the service, spoke warmly of the friend she'd known for 40 years. In the later months of 1973, Sue followed Kathy's lead and became the second C&P woman to "go outside" and become an installer. Tom O'Donnell, who had worked with Kathy at The Columbia Bank after she retired from C&P, described her as a "shining light in this world." And Kathy's niece, Cori Harrison, bravely fought tears to share how she "felt so much love" when she was with her aunt. She told of testing Kathy's insistence on being called Aunt Kathy by sending her an "Ant Kathy" card, a card that Kathy cherished for years before lovingly sending it back to Cori for a special occasion.

I know this is not traditional fare for a column this time of year. But life's main events have no calendar, and celebrations arrive in many forms. Kathy's life was a year-round celebration of life and love. Her passing in this season of giving is a reminder that the greatest gift any of us have to offer is ourselves; to share our time and our love with friends and family, as well as strangers on the street, as Kathy did all her life. The memory of her example, bolstered by her lifetime of good works, will rekindle her light in the lives of the many people she touched.



## HELP FOR LAID- OFF AND UNEMPLOYED VERIZON WORKERS

As we approach the first lay-off of Verizon workers in our area, multiple attempts by the Union to negotiate options to avert job losses have been rejected by the Company. CWA has presented numerous options, such as negotiating special pension offers to add time and/or age as well as additional financial options. Another option we proposed included allowing CST's to downgrade to Services Technician positions in areas where they are currently soliciting OPT's to move to the Services Technician title. Verizon flat out rejected these proposals. While CWA will continue to investigate and pursue legal options regarding all aspects of the Article 35 declarations, those affected by the layoff notifications can seek assistance through the following state agencies.

### 1. To apply for Unemployment Compensation:

**Maryland-** file a claim on line- <http://www.dlir.state.md.us/employment/unemployment.shtml>, under "claimant information", click on "apply for unemployment insurance benefits"

**DC-** <http://www.does.dc.gov/does/cwp/view.a,1232,q,537855,doesNav,1320621.asp>,

Click on "file for unemployment benefits"

**Virginia-** <http://www.vec.virginia.gov/vecportal/index.cfm>, click on "I am unemployed" and file on-line

### 2. For One Stop Career Centers which offer a range of services to people looking for work including resume prep, job listings etc:

**Maryland-** <http://www.dlir.state.md.us/county/>

**DC-** <http://www.does.dc.gov/does/cwp/view.a,1232,q,537855,doesNav,1320621.asp>,

Click on "Dislocated workers unit"

**Virginia-** <http://www.vec.virginia.gov/vecportal/index.cfm>, click on "I am looking for a job"

*I learned in the early part of my career that labor must bear the cross for others' sins, must be the vicarious sufferer for the wrongs that others do.*

Mother Jones

For those who haven't heard, Verizon is in the midst of their biggest layoff in more than fifty years. Many of the people getting laid off are asking why. Why is a company that can't keep up with the demands of serving their customers, laying off employees? I have a two word answer:

Mismanagement and Greed.

Mismanagement because for the last several years Verizon hasn't been able to figure out what business they want to be in. Almost six years ago they announced their intention to enter the cable tv business and compete directly with the biggest competitors in the cable industry. They claimed they would transform from a copper to a fiber based network in five years. They believed the unlimited capacity available from fiber optic cable would make the product so spectacular that customers would flock to Verizon to get this new Fiber Optic Service (FiOS). They believed they could pretty much ignore their current customers, treat them like sh\*t, ignore the copper based network customers altogether and still have consumers practically beg them for FiOS. **Boy, were they ever wrong!**

C&P Telephone Company, Bell Atlantic and even Verizon in its early days, had a very satisfied customer base. That wasn't because the product was so superior. Dial tone, no matter how many bells and whistles you attach to it, is still dial tone. That loyal customer following resulted from one thing and one thing only: Customer Service. Superior customer service over any potential competitors out there. I spent twenty years going into customers' homes as a maintenance technician. In twenty years I can count on one hand the number of times I was challenged by a customer asking to see my company pass. I can count on one finger the number of times they did that before opening the front door. It's not that I'm such a trustworthy person that customers just naturally knew it. It's because they were accustomed to the superior customer service we provided. That all went away beginning six years ago. Verizon forgot the most basic axiom of business:

*Make it your business to take care of your customers, and your customers will take care of your business.*

In the meantime, their largest competitors in the cable industry sat up and took notice. When a Fortune 25 giant the size of Verizon Communications places your industry in its crosshairs and says they are coming after your market, you notice those things.

Pretty soon, at least here in Maryland, wherever Verizon was pushing full steam ahead putting fiber optic cable in the ground, Comcast mysteriously went into those neighborhoods with a triple-play package of services severely discounted in price. In order to get the severely discounted price you had to sign a two-year contract. So six to nine-months down the road, when Verizon began offering this wonderful new service called FiOS, many of those customers were locked into two year agreements. When you couple that with the fact that they had been treated like sh\*t by Verizon the last several years, it wasn't any wonder they saw no pressing reason to switch. Our greatest advantage over our competitors, Customer Service, had been lost. Actually, lost is too kind a term. Our advantage was given away by the very people managing this business at the highest levels.

I don't really blame the local management people we see and work with everyday. They are at the mercy of those pulling the strings at the upper levels

of management. They have been constantly threatened with losing their job if they don't reach a certain (mostly unattainable) performance goal. I think we can all recognize these have not been idle threats. We all know of someone in management who no longer works here. It's the folks at the Executive Levels who have failed. Failed and seem intent on continuing that failure. So much so that this year they decided their flagship product, the one that was going to take the industry by storm and knock the socks off of their customers, wasn't performing well enough to continue the expansion. They decided to drastically cut the construction build into new areas and concentrate on gaining more customers in the areas where they have already built. They will tell you that is the reason for these layoffs. I personally am not convinced.



I think there are other reasons they don't want to talk about. I believe the problem is corporate officer greed. We've seen this too many times over the past ten years. Can you spell ENRON? How about Country-Wide Mortgage or Bernie Madoff? Each of these are examples of absolute greed and short term thinking, planning and profit taking.

I believe today Verizon is being run primarily by people who came out of the Verizon Wireless side of the business. I think they fundamentally don't believe in any consumer product connected by wires, be they copper, fiber or otherwise. I think just like in the late 1990's when Bell Atlantic intentionally tried to lose access lines so they could prove to regulators that they had competition, these people intentionally don't care about their landline customers because they aren't a part of the business they are most familiar with. The really frightening part of this scenario is we've been down this road before. See if this doesn't sound familiar.

About twenty-six years ago there was company that had over ninety percent of the market share that was broken up by the government. It was called AT&T and it owned what was known as the Bell System of telephone companies nation-wide. I started my career with that company. At the time of the break-up of the Bell System, the generally accepted wisdom was that AT&T, cut loose from the strangle-hold of what they considered the anchor around their neck known as the Bell Operating Companies, would take the world by storm. They forgot what business they were in and abandoned their greatest asset, Customer Service.

In the meantime, those anchors known as the Bell Operating Companies didn't forget. They soon figured out there was money to be made in that landline going into a customers house. They understood that what set them apart was the high level of customer service they provided. With that revelation came many profits. In the meantime, this giant known as AT&T floundered in every new venture they entered into. They did so poorly that eventually AT&T became at&t after the anchor known as SBC Communications swallowed them up. Now we have Verizon embarking down the same path that AT&T got lost on.

In 2003, the year before Verizon announced plans to enter the cable tv business, they were listed at number 10 on the Forbes Magazine Fortune 500 list. They were number one in telecommunications. Today, they have fallen to number 17 and number 2 respectively. Verizon forgot what business they were in. They have moved from the customer service business to the business of let me get mine before I move on to someplace else. It's corporate greed plain and simple.

And who suffers for it? We do. The people working for Verizon. This layoff makes no sense when you examine what we are doing to customers every day. We leave them out of service for two and three weeks at a time and when they call into the Business Office to take their business elsewhere we are expected to save the customer and convince them not to cancel their service.

In the words of one famous American, Pete Hogwallop, "THAT DON'T MAKE NO SENSE".

As Union members, we don't have the ability to control how they run the business. We do, however; have each other for protection and it looks like we're all going to need that as we move into an uncertain future.

If I didn't get a chance to see you over the holidays let me wish you a Happy New Year.

In Solidarity,

**Communications Workers of America Local 2108**

**2108News**

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**Recording Announcements**

- Verizon ..... (301) 595-1824
- VCSI ..... (301) 595-1826
- Avaya ..... (301) 595-1834
- Idearc ..... (301) 595-3072



*We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family and friends of:*

Ida Simmons, sister of Glenda Carpenter who died on October 4, 2009.  
 Gloria Hopkins, mother of **Denon Hopkins** who died on October 26, 2009.  
 Annie Caroline Thompson, mother-in-law of retired member **Shirley Thompson** who died on October 27, 2009.  
 Abraham Williams, a retired member who died on October 30, 2009.  
 George Christopher Stephens, brother of **Kevin Stephens** who died on November 2, 2009.  
 William Powell, stepfather of **Mike Foster** who died on November 8, 2009.  
 Marion Boswell, a retired member and sister of retired members **Charlene Taylor, Iomia Bland and active member Dolly Terrell** who died on November 14, 2009.  
 Harold Douglas Williams, father of **Micki Wade** who died on November 18, 2009.  
 Connie Swiner, father of **Roderic Swiner** who died on November 21, 2009.  
 Wendell "Jake" Jaquith, father of **Wayne Jaquith** who died on December 14, 2009.  
 Racheal Johnson, mother of retired member **Sandrya McQuater** who died on December 21, 2009.

*Congratulations to:*

Stacey and John Shifflett on the birth of their son, **Ryan Patrick Shifflett** on October 15, 2009

Kendra and Phillip Hughes on the birth of their son, **Tyson Andrew Hughes** on November 20, 2009.



## CWA LOCAL 2108 DELEGATE ELECTION GUIDELINES

Nominations for at-large delegates to the CWA International Annual Convention will be held at the January 13, 2010 Membership Meeting. Nominees and those who nominate them must be members in good standing of our Local. Nominees must be present to accept the nomination, or must provide a signed letter of acceptance to the chair of the Election Committee prior to nominations. In the event that the Membership Meeting is cancelled due to a snow emergency declaration in Prince Georges' County, nominations will be rescheduled for the next regularly scheduled Membership Meeting on February 10, 2010.

Ballots will be mailed on January 29, 2010 and counted on February 19, 2010. A declared snow emergency may delay ballot mailing and/or counting.

Candidates may have use of the Local's facilities for the purpose of mailing campaign literature to the membership beginning 30 days prior to nominations being scheduled. As membership list labels will no longer be printed, any candidate who wishes to mail campaign literature should furnish their envelopes or flyers to the Local. Within four business days the Local will print the names and addresses on the material. The Local will not furnish envelopes or postage. This and all other expenses are to be borne by the candidates.

The Local postage machine may not be used to affix postage to the envelopes. Arrangements for use of the Local facilities should be made with the Chair of the Election Committee, Dedria Tyree, who can be contacted through the Local office on (301) 595-2108. Use of the Local's facilities and campaigning may not be done on union-paid time.

A complete copy of the Local 2108 Election Committee Rules are available on our website ([www.cwalocal2108.org](http://www.cwalocal2108.org)) or by mail. Simply call the Local and we will send them to you.

The following have submitted their photos to the 2108News and are candidates for at-large delegates for Local 2108:



Carl Brogden



LaTasha Carpenter



Larry Gibson

The December RMC Meeting was bitter-sweet. As is our tradition, we savored a delicious catered lunch while enjoying the fellowship of our CWA brothers and sisters in retirement. While we enjoyed the company of all the attendees, our thoughts and conversations centered on Kathy Harrison's life and her passing.

Kathy was a driving force behind the creation of our RMC 2108, in addition to being elected its first president. She was active in politics and community service prior to and after retiring, and helped to steer our RMC in the right direction in those areas. Kathy was a friend to all who knew her, and will be greatly missed. Her husband and our fellow RMC 2108 member, Steve Williams, is in our thoughts.

Health care reform remains our top priority. While we consider health care reform a necessity, it is essential that our health care benefits not be taxed. Please contact your Congressional Representative and encourage them to do away with the Senate's "Cadillac tax" when the House and Senate bills are merged. A tax on health care plans is the opposite of reform. It will hit middle-class families and working Americans hard. The House bill contains alternative methods for paying for reform, including taxing the wealthiest Americans (families earning more than one million dollars per year). CWA supports the House methods of funding.

I wish all active and retired members of CWA a happy and healthy 2010. Our next RMC 2108 meeting will be held Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:00a.m. Even if you haven't joined our RMC Chapter yet, we invite all retirees to attend a meeting to learn more about what we do. Happy New Year!

**RMC 2108**  
**Retirees Corner**  
 Calvin Foster  
 President RMC 2108



**RMC 2108**

The plain old Yellow Pages are no more. At least, that's what management at the company formerly known as Idearc Media want everyone to believe.

When Verizon spun off its yellow pages division a little over two years ago, those people working for Verizon Information Services went from a relatively stable working environment to one akin to a roller coaster ride that we can only hope will come to an end soon. Just over two years after the spin off, Idearc Media filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection against the mountain of debt resulting the spin off.

With the new year and the new decade, Idearc Media has emerged from bankruptcy with approximately 2/3 less debt and a new name. Idearc Media is now **"SuperMedia"**.

Let's hope the management at SuperMedia do more than simply adopt a new name. Let's hope they can recognize the greatest asset any company has going for it is not the upper level management team. If SuperMedia is to succeed it will be for one reason only, the workers. Without top notch sales people, a dedicated and skilled support team in place, SuperMedia is once again destined for failure.

Management needs to see individual workers as the asset they truly are, not as so many cogs in the machine. The development of a skilled sales force takes time and is not measured by what you did last week, last month or even last year. Business cycles, the economy, the changing marketplace, all have an impact on sales performance. One of Idearc's problems was the short-term thinking that has allowed good solid salespeople to leave the business and take that talent elsewhere. It's short-sighted and is a recipe for failure.

## Winner! Winner! Chicken Dinner!

Local 2108 members had three opportunities at the December Membership to win some cold hard cash to help pay for some of what Santa showed up with.

First, there is the 50/50 drawing, next comes the Pot O'Gold drawing, which comprises the collective other half of the 12 months prior 50/50 drawings. Last, we have the largest and most important drawing for the Childrens Hospital raffle.

This year the winners were as follows:

**December 50/50** - LaTasha Carpenter who won \$31.00.

**Pot O'Gold** - Rose Howe who won \$ 168.00.

**Children's Hospital 50/50** - Ron Wheeler who won \$ 1,139.50.



### JANUARY 2010

- 1 **New Year's Day**  
Local Office Closed
- 6 **Chief Stewards Meeting - 9:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 7-9 **Metro Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Leadership Conference**  
Atlantic City, NJ
- 13 **Retired Members Chapter Meeting, 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 13 **Membership Meeting**  
**Delegate Election Nominations 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 27 **Stewards Meeting 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 29 **Ballots Mailed for Delegate Election**

### FEBRUARY 2010

- 3 **Chief Stewards Meeting - 9:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 10 **Retired Members Chapter Meeting, 11:00am**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 10 **Membership Meeting 6:00pm**  
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 15 **Presidents Day Holiday**  
Union Negotiated Holiday
- 19 **Ballots Counted for Delegate Election**

**SAVE THE DATES:**  
 January 13 - Retired Members Chapter Meeting - 11:00am  
 January 13 - Membership Meeting and Delegate Election Nominations - 6:00pm  
 January 27 - Stewards Meeting - 6:00pm

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